DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 165 833 JC 790 105

TITLE	Report on Follow-Up Data Regarding Graduates of Transfer and Career Programs.
INSTITUTION	Rockland Community Coll., Suffern, N.Y.
PUB DATE	30 Apr 78
NOTE	24p.
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Community Colleges; Curriculum Evaluation; Employer Attitudes; Employment Patterns; *Followup Studies; *Graduate Surveys; *Junior Colleges; *Participant Satisfaction; Student Attitudes; Student Characteristics; Transfer Students; Vocational Education

ABSTRACT

A random sample of 500 graduates (from a total population of 4,046) of Rockland Community College (RCC) were surveyed in two groups, humanities/social science graduates and career program graduates. Career graduates were also individually interviewed. The overall response rate was 52%; telephone checks of non-respondents indicated no respondent bias. Data were also gathered from 15 employers of RCC graduates in the fields of nursing, criminal justice, secretarial skills, and data processing. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents were female, though no significant differences with male responses were indicated. Other respondent characteristics were typical of the school population: 60% were under 30 years of age and 95% were white. Responses revealed that 75% of the graduates continued to a four-year institution and received bachelor's degrees. For humanities/social science graduates this percentage was 83%, for career program graduates, 67%. The data suggested that many students tended to commute to other institutions and thus remained members of the community. In general, three-fourths of the graduates were working in the field of their choice. No significant correlations were found between salary and age, salary and number of jobs, or salary and degree earned. An overwhelming majority of comments indicated that the work at RCC was too easy. Employers consistently rated graduate employees highly. The survey instruments are appended. (MB)

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ROCKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

SUFFERN, NEW YORK

APRIL 30, 1978

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REPORT ON FOLLOW-UP DATA REGARDING

GRADUATES OF TRANSFER AND CAREER PROGRAMS

JC 790 105

A random sample of five hundred graduates of Rockland Community College were contacted to conduct a follow up investigation. Resulcs of the study indicate that 75% of graduates continue to a four-year institution and receive bachelors degrees. Loss of credits in transfer is minimal and the graduates report that what they learn at RCC prepare them well for subsequent courses. The sampled students feel now that they would have been better prepared had the work at RCC been more difficult.

Responses also indicate that approximately three-fourths of the graduates are working in the field of their curricular choice at RCC and they rate their training as good to very good. Employers consistently rated RCC graduate employees highly.

Additional specific information can be found in the report along with questions and recommendations.

Rockland Community College is dedicated to offering students total education, vocational and avocational, regardless of formal entrance requirements, with provision for complete vertical and horizontal mobility. Education can be defined as the obtaining of knowledge or skill through an instructional process. To determine whether or not the college is staisfying its objective, it is reasonable to ask if its graduates experience success with regard to the use of knowledge and skills taught in their respective curricula. For the purposes of this study, such success is defined as (a) the acceptance of RCC credits in transfer to a four-year institution, (b) possession of knowledge and skills requisite to successive courses of study, and (c) maintenance of employment which necessitates such knowledge and/or skills.

Procedure

Five hundred names were selected from the college's list of graduates (N=4046). The selection process of the study was random to eliminate bias and maximize generalizability. Randomization was achieved by the use of a chart of random numbers matched to numbers assigned to the list of graduates. Once the sample was determined, two groups were formed, based on major curriculum while at RCC. Those students who pursued humanities and social sciences formed Group A. Students graduating from career programs formed Group B.

Former students in Group A were considered to have been in transfer programs and numbered 185. An initial contact letter (see Appendix A) was sent to each graduate in Group A. Two weeks later a questionnaire (see Appendix B) designed essentially for students who transferred to a four-year institution, was sent to each member of Group A. Thirty-seven questionnaires were returned by the post office, leaving 148 graduates reached. Fifteen new members were added to replace the post office returns, four of these being returned by the post office. The new number of contacted graduates from Group A became 159. Of

these, 76 returned the completed questionnaire (response rate of 48%). One month later 15 of the non-respondents were reached by phone, and their responses were elicited verbally. This not only increased Group A's size to 91 (for a 57% return) but also provided a comparison to assess respondent bias. Three hundred fifteen graduates were assigned to Group B and were sent a questionnaire (see Appendix C) designed to make interview arrangements possible. Forty-one of these questionnaires were returned by the post office, leaving 274 contacted graduates. One hundred twelve returned the questionnaire (a 47% return) and 106 of these were successfully interviewed. Twenty-one of the non-respondents were reached and interviewed to assess respondent bias. This yielded 147 interview results or 46% of the contacted list. Groups A and B together yielded an overall response of 52%, higher than the usual range of 38-48% found in six different comparable studies referenced.

When the data were gathered, fifteen employers of RCC graduates were contacted by phone, and a structured interview (see Appendix D) was conducted by the researcher.

Three student aides were trained by the investigator to conduct the graduate interviews. At the end of the training session, three simulated interviews were conducted, and the students recorded the results. Inter-rater reliability was then determined by means of Ebel's formula yielding the following results:

1. Student X with Student Y .97
2. Student Y with Student Z .98
3. Student X with Student Z .97

The students then conducted the graduate interviews.

Results and Implications

There was no statistically significant difference between respondents

and non-respondents (see Table 1) with regard to type and distribution of responses, thereby increasing the potential generalizability of investigation results.

TABLE 1

Comparison of Respondent and Non-Respondent Data

	Continued with school	Jobs in field	Male	Female	Mean Salary
Respondent	65%	73%	31%	69%	$10,925
Non-Respondent	67%	77%	40%	60%	10,770

Since there was no respondent bias indicated, all results were pooled and reported as a unit.

Thirty-three percent of the surveyed population was male and 67% was female. Since those figures were different from those for the enrolled student population at RCC, responses of males and females were investigated for disparity. Again there were no significant differences in responses, thereby still enabling results to be generalizable. However, it should be noted that responses in Group A (questionnaire return) were evenly divided between males and females. Group B (interviews) responses were heavily weighted toward females. It can be reasoned that this condition is a result of two variables; (a) heavily enrolled career programs are more popular among females (nursing, human services) and (b) males tend to respond to inquiry on paper rather than by interview techniques.

Sixty percent of the population was under 30 years of age, 24% was 30-45 years of age, and 16% was 46 or more years of age. Ninety-five percent of the population studied was white, 3% black, and 2% hispanic. These percentages are typical of the school population attesting to randomized selection.

The percentages of the respondent population with regard to number of years out of RCC are listed in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Number of Years Out of RCC in Percentages

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	10
3	24	12	11	22	14	8	3	3

The students in Table 2 indicate a desirable spread with regard to opportunity for future endeavor by the RCC graduate.

Distribution in percentages of the sample population with regard to major curriculum at RCC are as follows:

Social Sciences		20
Humanities		
English	5	
Foreigh Language	1	
Math	4	
Phys. Education	1	
Science	5	
Art	4	20
Business	15	
Sec. Studies	4	
Data Processing	2	21
Nursing		22
Human Services		9
Criminal Justice		3

Occupational Therapy	1	
Electrical Technology	1	
Dental Assisting	1	
Graphic Arts	1	
College A	.05	
Int. Baccalaureate	.05	100%

Curricula at RCC not represented above were sampled, but students did not respond. In the subsequent random selection for non-respondent contact, those curricula were not studied. The probability of this condition is high since unrepresented curricula had few names on the original graduate list as compared with represented curricula. Specifically, unrepresented curricula are as follows:

Auto Technology

Fire Technology

Food Service

International College

Medical Lab. Technology

Performing Arts

A subsequent graduate follow-up study which would include the unrepresented curricula is recommended.

Results of this study regarding subsequent activities of graduates are reported in general for the school. However, to limit description to the college in general would mask variation among the numerous curricula and thereby risk giving misinformation as well as shedding inadequate light. Therefore, results are being reported by curriculum. Humanities and business are treated as curricular units, however, since number of responses tend to become fractionalized by department to the degree whereby information becomes disproportionate. It should be remembered that where information by curriculum represents a very small percentage of the total response, that result is

disproportionate but is listed for curriculum representation.

Seventy-five percent of RCC's graduates continued to a four-year institution and received bachelor's degrees. The percentage for members of Group A, the transfer program graduates, was 83. However, 67% of group B members, career program graduates, also earned bachelor's degrees. Responses of Group B indicated the reason for continuing their education was to enhance their career potential. However, one third of this group also indicated a desire to continue with school. This response can be considered an indicator of affective enhancement (Kintzer 1976 and Henard 1978).[1,2] Percentages of graduates by curriculum who earned bachelor's degrees together with credits lost in transfer are listed in Table 3.

TABLE 3

Earned Bachelors and Articulation by Department

Curriculum	Percent Earned Bachelors	Percent Reporting Credit Loss in Transfer	Amount of Credit Loss
Social Science	75	17	1 to 2 courses
Humanities	100	8	1 course
Business	74	36	1 to 2 courses
Human Services	100	12	1 to 2 courses
Nursing	52	12	1 to 2 courses
Criminal Justice	50	0	
Occupational Therapy	100	0	
International Bac.	100	0	
Graphic Arts	50	0	
College A	0	0	
Dental Assisting	50	100	1 course
Electrical Technology	0	--	

[1] F. Kintzer, Articulation and Transfer, ERIC Clearinghouse for Jr. Colleges, Topical Paper No. 59, Los Angeles; Dec 1976

[2] R. Henard, The Uses of Surveys of Graduates, Paper presented at annual meeting of American Educational Research Association, Toronto, 1978

It would appear from the above information that the Human Services and Business Departments with a sizeable proportion of graduates reporting losses in transfer might investigate the causal conditions. It might or might not be a function of RCC. Some graduates might be changing majors and some may have grades unacceptable to the four-year institution.

Graduates who continued in four-year institutions dispersed as follows:

Private Schools in Rockland and/or Westchester	41%
SUNY Schools	35%
Out of New York State	14%
Private in New York State	6%
CUNY	4%

The statistics cited above indicate that many students tend to commute and remain members of the community. Reasons for this condition might be explored in the future.

The present activities of RCC graduates by curriculum are listed in Table 4.

Table 4

Present Activities of Graduates by Curriculum

Activity	Soc. Stud.	Humanities	Bus	Nurs	Hum Serv	O.T.	Int Bac	Dent Asst	E.T.	Coll A	Crim Just	Gr Arts
F/T Student	17%	31%	11%			100%		33%				50%
F/T Employees	58%	46%	68%	93%	50%		100%	66%	100%	100%	70%	50%
Comb. Students & Employed	17%	15%	21%	7%	50%							
Other Unemployed	8%											
at Home	8%											

The cases in which the graduates continued with their education, responses indicate, that aside from credit loss in transfer, they were well prepared for subsequent courses in terms of material learned. They felt, however, that more difficult tasks would have provided them with a more solid base for future educational endeavors.

In general, three-fourths of RCC graduates are working in the field of their choice. Descriptive statistics of this proportion of the population are listed in Table 5. The statistics include the percent by curriculum working in their chosen field, the mean salary being earned by that group and the mean group rating on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) of department preparation for their present position.

Table 5

Characteristics of Graduates Working in Field of Choice

Curriculum	Soc/Sci	Hum.	Bus.	Nursing	H.Serv.	Cr.Just	D/A	Int.Bac	El.Tech	G/Arts	Coll A
% In Field	89%	92%		93%	66%	70%	66%	100%	100%	50%	N/A
Mean Salary	$10,100	$11,500	$12,200	$11,200	$9,600	$9,700	$9,300	$10,000	$9,000	$9,000	
Dept.Rating	3.75	3.9	3.5	3.5	3.5	4.2	3.5	4.4	3.5	3.2	4.0

It cannot be concluded that the remaining percentage of the group are working outside their chosen field. Many are currently enrolled as students in four-year institutions.

Graduate recommendations for college departments, which would account for the above ratings, are listed below:

1. Social Science & Humanities: Strengthen courses with increased independent research, spend time on human nature and how to deal with it on the job; advise more regarding career opportunities; enlarge engineering.

2. *Business: More language development in data processing, use dictating machines in secretarial studies; more field experiences.*

3. *Nursing and Human Services: Theory good but much more field work needed; more coordination among courses needed in human services program.*

4. *Criminal Justice: Advise students of poor job market and options available, get into public safety.*

5. *Electrical Technology: Must develop better laboratory.*

6. *Dental Assisting: Courses seem unrelated.*

One sixth of the employed graduates are working in areas unrelated to their preparation at RCC. Of this group 47% cite the reason for change as no job opportunities in their original career choice. The remaining 59% experienced a personal change of objectives thus leading to a new career path. Five percent of these graduates claim nothing at RCC helped them in their present endeavor. However, 95% state that their liberal arts training at the college helped them in their new field.

A comparison of Group A (transfer programs) and Group B (career programs) with regard to location of employment is illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6

Location of Graduate Employment

Location	*Rockland*	*Westchester*	*Other*
Group A	*42%*	*8%*	*50%*
Group B	*53%*	*14%*	*33%*

The implication of this condition is that RCC trains many students who live and are gainfully employed in the local area. The difference between the groups is probably a result of students who go away to school tending to remain away for career endeavor. Seventy-one percent of the graduates have had one job since they

began full-time employment. Twenty-two percent have had two jobs, 5% have had three jobs, 1% reports 4 jobs, and 1% six jobs. The correlations between salary and age, salary and number of jobs, and salary with degree earned are reported in Table 7.

Table 7

Salary Correlations

	Age	No of Jobs	Degree
Salary	.123	-.214	-.019
Age		-.027	-.121
No. of Jobs			.057

Not only are none of the correlation coefficients significant, but they indicate absolutely no predictability from one variable to another. The implication of this condition is that career paths and levels are affected largely by the individual rather than by the conditions tested in the above analysis.

A comparison of teacher ratings between Group A and Group B can be seen in Table 8. If the graduate indicated a general rating of good to excellent, an average was recorded. If, however, the response was one of "some were great and some were terrible", then a mixed rating was recorded. In the "fair" category responses other than the word fair fell into two categories: (a) too easy and (b) impersonal. It appears that these two aspects are the prime considerations among students. This is verified frequently by comments such as "they taught us a great deal" and "they really cared about the students" appearing with very good and excellent ratings.

Table 8

Faculty Rating

Rating	Mixed	Poor	Fair	Adequate	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Group A	12%	1$	9%	22%	13%	15%	10%
Group B	10%		11%	10%	25%	26%	18%

It appears that among the group that had a higher percentage of students continuing in four-year institutions, there is a greater tendency toward central rating and a lower tendency toward high faculty rating. It must be reported that whenever specific reference was made to the English Department, the ratings were excellent. This occured in one-third of the responses.

In this study, the responses of graduates appear to verify faculty suspicion that they have to be more demanding in their disciplines and more affectively involved with students.

A comparison of counseling rating between Group A graduates and Group B graduates can be seen in Table 9. When no counseling was reported it was not always evident that the condition resulted from lack of need or lack of availability. This situation needs further investigation. It would seem, however, based on the responses that no counseling is better than poor counseling, due to the fact that a statement of "none" most often appeared without negative comments attached whereas "poor" was in all cases attacked for improper direction.

Table 9

Counseling Ratings

Ratings	None	Poor	Adequate	Good	Very Helpful
Group A	33%	23%	16%	14%	14%
Group B	22%	36%	23%	14%	5%

It appears from the results in Table 9 that counseling at RCC addresses the problems of the transfer program student better than students of career programs. This issue needs to be addressed by the counseling staff and possible reasons for this condition will not be conjectured here. It should also be reported that whenever the rating was high, a specific individual was mentioned which indicated that students respond not to the general counseling process, but to the one-to-one situation.

A space was provided at the end of the questionnaire and in the interviews conducted for any comments the graduate chose to add. The comments were similar in both formats and will be presented as a unit. Some of the comments have already been included in discussions where germaine. The following are additional comments generic to the college.

An overwhelming majority of the comments indicated that the work at RCC was too easy. This seemed to be a prevailing feeling in retrospective assessment. A few of the graduates stated that they sought four-year institutions that would accept their credits in transfer. This raises an obvious question with regard to the college's excellent rate of transfer. About half the students recommended that the college offer more information regarding job opportunities. Several graduates indicated they had been pleased by the fact that some of the faculty were approachable to help satisfy their needs. Isolated comments included (a) have more discussion than lecture, (b) faculty frequently late for class, (c) counselors should seek students, (d) improve registration, and (e) have listings of faculty objectives so the students could seek those that matched their own.

It was mentioned earlier that interviews were conducted with employers of RCC graduates. Four occupational fields were represented; nursing, criminal justice, secretarial skills, and data processing. Results are discussed separately since the fields are unique.

Nine nursing graduates were rated by their employers as good to very good since in all cases they were responsible, cooperative, and anxious to learn. They were not given an "excellent" rating, since they had a need to develop more clinical skills. One employer noted that this situation might account for the desire to learn evidenced by the graduates. All the employers felt the nurses had the basic training skills upon entry. When comparing RCC graduates to other nurses under their supervision, they said that the college's graduates lacked organization and the ability to set priorities. Specific needs mentioned

(a) IV feedings, (b) male catheter, and (c) dispensing medicine. Their general prespective of the job market is that it is not great, but good nurses are needed and will find jobs. Consistent recommendation to the college is to provide more field experience. Their recommendations to nursing students were to do more independent study and to seek part-time jobs in health care facilities.

A Criminal Justice graduate was rated as very good because he was conscientious and well-trained. It was very difficult to compare RCC graduates, though several were employed there, with others since it was felt that the best training was on-the-job and that response was individual. The supervisor feels the program is good but the market exceedingly poor. He feels students should be apprised of this situation.

RCC secretaries were highly rated and compared favorable with others, but recommendations for the program were made. Employers indicated less need for shorthand today and increased dependency on dictation equipment and suggested this be included. The need for word processing was cited in all cases. One employer discussed a need to train secretaries for improvement to management. She felt that secretaries should have good entry skills and basic training to provide for upward mobility.

Two RCC data processors were very highly rated and reported as possessing requisite skills at entry. However, several suggestions were forthcoming. It was recommended that students have more concentrated training in one language and PL-1 was seen as the appropriate language today. Greater operations orientation appears to be needed. The program should deal with utilities and job control language to a greater extent, and the student should be familiar with systems. The job market was assessed as excellent once entry and experience were accomplished, but entry with a two-year training is difficult. Consequently, students should be encouraged to continue to the four-year institution.

Discussion

In the opening remarks of this report mention was made of indicators of college program success as (a) the acceptance of RCC credits in transfer to a four-year institution, (n) possession of knowledge and skills requisite to successive courses of study, and (c) maintenance of employment which necessitates such knowledge and/or skills. Inquiry procedure and results to determine the state of such indicators have been discussed. Though results are generally favorable, complacency is not in order. Additional feedback has been provided the college by this study and it remains for RCC personnel to do with as they will. Implications of results are clear and so is the need for further investigation. A few additional comments are in order.

The study is ex post facto. Human perceptions change from day to day, no less year to year. There is a need to study not only perceptions at present, but the perceptual changes that takes place. A "purer" research investigation would be to gather assessment from students when they are enrolled and then follow up on them after they have left the college. This process would probably sensitize them to the college's need for feedback and yield an even higher respondent rate in subsequent investigations. Biannual reviews of this nature are being recommended not only for periodic feedback, but to provide a data base to determine emerging patterns over time.

RCC serves a varied clientele. Many of its part-time students pass through ingesting portions of the educational process. These temporary students may transfer prior to program completion or they may take isolated courses at will. Are individual educational needs as well satisfied by this condition as upon program completion? Information is needed to determine the college's success as supplier of education in this arena, since enrollment trends seem to indicate increased demand on the part of Rockland's citizenry for such cycled education. Answers to these above questions and others raised in this report are needed if the college is to successfully "offer to students total education."

ROCKLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE | 145 College Road, Suffern, New York 10901 | 914 356-4650

Office of Institutional Research

APPENDIX A

February 21, 1978

Dear Rockland Community College Graduate,

Your name has been selected from the list of Rockland Community College graduates to participate in a study that is presently being conducted.

Educational researchers at Rockland are investigating the present activities of some of our graduates. This study has been undertaken so as to determine where Rockland Community College's strengths and weaknesses lie. You, the graduate, are the most accurate source of this information.

Soon you will receive a questionnaire. Your response will enable us to discover how we met our objectives in some cases and how we might improve our service in the future. Please take a few minutes to respond and return the questionnaire in the postage-paid envelope provided.

Your help is vital and will not only be appreciated by the college but will also help future students of Rockland Community College.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Poris

Dr. Marilyn Poris
Director, Institutional Research

MP/vj
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APPENDIX B

Name _____

Curriculum _____

A short while ago we sent you a letter which explained a study being conducted at Rockland Community College. This is the questionnaire to follow-up that letter. It should take no more than fifteen minutes to respond to the items. The questionnaire can then be returned in the enclosed postage-paid envelope.

Your help is sincerely appreciated by the faculty, students, and administration at Rockland.

Please fill in the blanks with the appropriate information.

1. Number of years since you left Rockland Community College _____
(or year you left)

2. Your present major activity--student, employed, unemployed, other.

3. If you are a student:

   a) Where are you enrolled?

   b) Did you attend immediately after leaving Rockland Community College?

      If no, what did you do in the years between?

   c) Is your field of study the same as it was at Rockland Community College?

      If no, explain briefly why you changed fields.

   d) How many RCC credits did you lose in transfer,if any?

   e) Was your experience at RCC an adequate preparation for your later study?

      If no, what area(s) were weak?

4. If you are employed:

   a) What is your position or what kind of work do you do?

   b) Where are you working? What town?

   c) Is your job related to what you studied at RCC"

      IF YES:
      How well were you prepared by your RCC experience?

      Please explain.

How would you rate your career potential at present?

If your job is not related to what you studied at RCC --

Why did you change fields?

Do you intend to keep looking in the field you studied at RCC?

d) What is your approximate yearly income from your work?

e) How many jobs have you held since leaving RCC?

5. In what ways did counseling at RCC help you?

6. Your present age -

7. Ethnicity - White_____ Black_____ Asian Oriental _____ Hispanic_____

American Indian _____ Other _____

8. How would you rate your major curriculum at RCC?

9. How would you rate your other courses at RCC?

10. How would you rate your teachers at RCC?

Please use the space below to make recommendations, based on your experiences or ratings above to RCC. Please use the space for any other comments as well. Again, thank you for your help.

APPENDIX C

PLEASE RETURN THIS FORM IN THE ENCLOSED POSTAGE-PAID ENVELOPE.

Last Name: _____ *First Name (and initial):* _____

Year which you received your RCC degree or certificate: _____

Current activity (EXAMPLE: Employed, in college, at home, unemployed, military):

_____

Best time for interview: Day(s) of week _____ *Time of day:* _____

Interview type you prefer:

Telephone (Please give your home and/or work numbers:) _____

On main campus: _____

Other location: _____

Your current mailing address: _____

_____

_____

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

APPENDIX D

EMPLOYER INTERVIEW

1. *How would you rate* _____ *as an employee?*

   Why?

2. *Did* _____ *come to the job with the skills needed from training:*

3. *How many other RCC graduates have been employed here?*

4. *How do RCC graduates compare with other employees?*

5. *What are the career potentials for that kind of position?*

6. *What do you feel is closing up in the job market?*

7. *What do you feel is opening up in the job market?*

8. *What recommendations would you have to RCC concerning programs?*

9. *What recommendation would you have for students attending RCC?*

APPENDIX E

TELEPHONE INTERVIEW

GRADUATE FOLLOW-UP

INTERVIEWS

NAME _____

AGE _____

Number of years out of RCC _____

Sex _____

Ethnicity _____

Curriculum _____

I. If attending school, where?

A. Are you in the same field you were at RCC?

IF YES --

1. Were your courses accepted in transfer?

2. Did you know what was expected?

3. What would your recommendation to RCC be regarding program?

4. How would you now rate your RCC teachers?

5. How would you have rated your RCC teachers when at RCC?

6. Did counseling help you?

7. Why did you continue with school?

B. IF NO -

1. Why did you change major?

2. What courses did you lose in transfer?

Why?

3. What would your recommendation to RCC be regarding program?

4. *How would you now rate your RCC teachers?*

5. *How would you have rated your RCC teachers when at RCC?*

6. *Did counseling help you?*

7. *Why did you continue with school?*

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LOS ANGELES
MAR 9 1979
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